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July 27, 1970

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Mr. William B. Lewis
Chairman of the Board
American Cancer Society
219 East Forty-Second Street
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Lewis:

We have received in our office, through the Tobacco Institute, a series of correspondence between the Tobacco Institute and the American Cancer Society, dated February 27, 1970 apparently through April 29, 1970, in which there is a running exchange between you and Mr. Joseph F. Cullman, 3rd. I was a bit disturbed by your replies to Mr. Cullman.

The first thing that disturbs me is the scientific release prior to publication in a recognized scientific journal by two research workers at a special press conference of their findings, as mentioned in the first sentence of the letter of February 27, 1970 to you from Mr. Cullman. In your answer to Mr. Cullman's letter on March 12, 1970, you state, "It is expected that the full report will be published in the very near future." You further stated that there was "...meticulous work..." in the latest scientific experiments which you believed meets the highest tradition and protocol of scientific investigation. This is somewhat disturbing to me in that two recognized, competent scientists would prefer to make their announcements publicly prior to publication in the usual scientific journals where they may be carefully examined and assessed by other scientists. This is sort of an unusual way for competent scientists to announce their scientific achievements and has somewhat the smack of sensationalism, and naturally I could understand why Mr. Cullman felt that there was something spurious in these studies.

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Mr. William B. Lewis
Chairman of the Board
American Cancer Society
Page #2

I notice in Mr. Cullman's letter to you on March 20, 1970, that there is a statement, "First, publication in a scientific journal will not occur until many months after the Waldorf-Astoria press conference of February 5." Again, for something as serious as this, this sounds like sensationalism rather than science. And, in your letter to Mr. Cullman of April 17, 1970, the whole tone of your letter suggests to one who is in the field of science and dealing with human beings that there is something that is not quite right in this study, otherwise, no outstanding scientist in research work who has done competent work would be afraid to expose his methodology and have others attempt to duplicate their work to substantiate it in disinterested laboratories. This situation is a far too serious one to be handled in such an arbitrary fashion as the American Cancer Society seems to have undertaken and certainly is not truly a scientific approach to the problem.

Definitely, I feel that the Tobacco Institute could set up an adequate research program, but I still feel that the results of these scientists' studies, as well as their microscopic tissue and slides, should be reviewed by others. The whole thing to me smacks like two little children having a knock-down-drag-out fight in the backyard, as to who threw the best baseball in the Atlanta Braves-New York Mets Game. This is certainly not the type of correspondence one would expect from the American Cancer Society.

As a supporter of your society, a member of the medical profession, and one who certainly has the greatest interest at heart, I feel that the protection of the American public, as well as the public throughout the world, from the dangers that may be incurred from the use of tobacco, that your organization would be most desirous to make every bit of data, method and knowledge available through proper scientific channels and not through the press, since you have already resorted to sensationalism through press releases. I should think that you would have no other course in all fairness but to comply with Mr. Cullman's request. What have you to lose by it if their work is as outstanding and as good as you claim, then it can only be confirmed.

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Mr. William B. Lewis
Chairman of the Board
American Cancer Society
Page #3

Confirmation by an antagonist is certainly test of your premise. Therefore, I am left with no other conclusion from the scientific standpoint, that all does not seem quite right.

After twenty-five years in the practice of medicine, and having done research work myself, I have seen too much scientific research work that began with a precluded premise and the work designed to prove the premise rather than designed to see if it disproved the premise that was originally undertaken. I am beginning to wonder if the American Cancer Society did not decide to go about proving that tobacco caused cancer of the lungs, rather than just going about to find out what the effects of tobacco were on the lung tissues and then accepting whatever they found as being significant. I am also interested in knowing whether due allowance has been made for other factors. I have no financial interest whatsoever in the tobacco industry and it makes very little difference to me whatsoever whether your research is honored or dishonored in this respect. It does, however, make a great deal of difference to me if the work is bona fide and true, and then, certainly, the public should be adequately protected from a dangerous substance.

Sincerely yours,


Edward M. Gates, M.D.

EMG/bk

cc/ Mr. Joseph F. Cullman, 3rd
Chairman of the Executive Committee
The Tobacco Institute, Inc.
Philip Morris, Inc.
100 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

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